

Critic claims the media 'demonizing' Muslims

By Hasan Jafri
Emerald Contributor

The American media is helping propagate the image that Muslims have replaced the Soviets as the new enemy, the editor of a Canadian-based Muslim newspaper said Friday at the University.

Zafar Bangash, editor of *Crescent International*, spoke to a small crowd at a lecture organized by the Muslim Student Association.

"Media takes the line from government policies," he said. "First, a scenario is painted and then justification is provided (by the media) to support it."

Bangash cited several examples to support his point.

The Western media's coverage of the first free elections in Algeria provided the first example, he said.

Even though the unconstitutional army coup ousted the Islamic Salvation Front that formed the government in this North African country, the media has projected the coup as "saving democracy from the hands of fundamentalists."

"The hypocrisy is mind-boggling," Bangash said. "Here the argument is being used that democracy is saved by subverting democracy."

The ISF is projected in the media as an anti-democratic party disregarding women's rights and banning alcohol, even though the predominantly Muslim Algerians voted overwhelmingly for the party, Bangash said.

The media are in the process of "demonizing Islam" just as they "demonized" Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War, he said.

During the war the U.S. government painted Saddam Hussein's image as a tyrant and ruthless dictator and the media promoted that image, he said.

Bangash strongly added that

he does not support Saddam Hussein.

Saddam was "demonized" to change public opinion about the war, he said. On Nov. 1, 1990, a CBS/*New York Times* poll showed Americans were not in favor of war to force Iraq out of Kuwait. But by Jan., 1991, public opinion had shifted in favor of using force.

One event which changed public opinion was the testimony of a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl Nayirah, who claimed Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait were killing babies by taking them out of incubators and leaving them to die.

President Bush cited this incident in several speeches to underscore his support for war. Several senators also cited the same testimony in the crucial war resolution debate as the reason for supporting the use of force, Bangash said.

But the American media made a deliberate effort not to reveal the identity of Nayirah, who was the daughter of the Kuwait's ambassador Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah, and had never been to Kuwait during the time she alleges the incident occurred, Bangash said.

Furthermore, later investigations by the organizations Middle East Watch and Amnesty International revealed that the incident never occurred.

On Sunday, *60 Minutes* aired a similar story about the alleged Iraqi atrocities. It showed the Kuwaiti government indirectly paid \$11 million to the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton to "sell the war" to the American people. The same firm also helped Nayirah's testimony to Congress, the program revealed.

Bangash charged that the media, in concert with the government, deliberately misled Americans into a war which left more than 250,000 Iraqi civilians dead.



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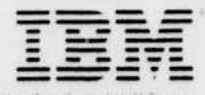


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